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FIRST BOOKS OF VERSE

Renascence and Other Poems, by Edna St. Vincent Millay.
Mitchell Kennerley.

Here is a very exceptional first book, a book which is achievement rather than promise. One would have to go back a long way in literary history to find a young lyric poet singing so freely and musically in such a big world. Almost we hear a thrush at dawn, discovering the ever-renewing splendor of the morning.

Renascence gave me the only thrill I received from Mr. Kennerley's 1912 anthology, *The Lyric Year*. It was so much the best poem in that collection that probably it's no wonder it didn't receive any one of the three prizes. Reading it once more, after six years' discipline in modern poetry, I am thrilled again. The surprise of youth over the universe, the emotion of youth at encountering inexplicable infinities—that is expressed in this poem, and it is a big thing to express. Moreover, it is expressed with a certain triumphant joy, the very mood of exultant youth; and the poet gets a certain freshness and variety into a measure often stilted. The poem is too compact for quotation—it should be read entire. Possibly its spiritual motive is summed up in the couplet:

God, I can push the grass apart
And lay my finger on Thy heart!

This poem is much the biggest thing in the book; indeed, one almost sighs with fear lest life, closing in on this poet as on so many others, may narrow her scope and vision.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

It requires a rare spiritual integrity to keep one's sense of infinity against the persistent daily intrusions of the world, the flesh and the devil; but only the poet who keeps it through the years can sing his grandest song.

But even without *Renascence* the book would be exceptional. Not so much for *Interim*, though its emotion is poignantly sincere and expressed without affectation, as for some of the briefer lyrics. Such songs as *Kin to Sorrow*, *Tavern*, *The Shroud*, are perfect of their very simple and delicate kind; and one or two of the sonnets are admirable—*Time does not Bring Relief* and *Bluebeard*. A few of the best songs were first printed in *POETRY*, though we find no acknowledgment of this fact in the book; (which, by the way—let me heap coals of fire on the publisher's head—is beautifully designed and printed.) Among the poems unfamiliar to our readers perhaps *God's World* is typical of the poet's mood and manner:

O world, I can not hold thee close enough!
Thy winds, thy wide grey skies!
Thy mists, that roll and rise!
Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag
And all but cry with color! That gaunt crag
To crush! To lift the lean of that black bluff!
World, World, I cannot hold thee close enough!

Long have I known a glory in it all,
But never knew I this—
Here such a passion is
As stretcheth me apart. Lord, I do fear
Thou'st made the world too beautiful this year.
My soul is all but out of me—let fall
No burning leaf; prithee, let no bird call.

H. M.